

Poland

THE MODERN WORLD
A SURVEY OF HISTORICAL FORCES
Edited by Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, F.R.S.

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POLAND

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FOREWORD

THE Treaty of Versailles has been termed a Carthaginian Peace. The epithet, which implies injustice, is misleading. Justice for justice, the political map of Europe, as it has been drawn in the Peace Treaties, compares favourably with the map which it replaced and is more closely in accord with the wishes of the populations concerned than any previous arrangements in European history. It would be truer to say of the Peace Treaties not that they are Carthaginian but that they are radical. As the revolutionary effervescence of the Napoleonic War was curbed by a Conservative Peace, so the Great War launched by the military Empires of Central Europe produced as a necessary consequence of their downfall a radical Peace. The Congress of Vienna suppressed, the Treaties of Versailles and Trianon released the minor nationalities from the thralldom under which they had long been fretting. The malady of Europe, diagnosed by the doctors of the Entente as repressed nationalism, was provided under these diplomatic instruments with an appropriate cure.

The real gravamen against the Treaties is not that they are unjust, but that they are speculative and uncertain. The Western Slav, the universal bondsman of the early Middle Ages, is delivered from the Teuton, the Muscovite and the Magyar whose predominance, rooted in energy, it has been the work of centuries to mature. Is it wise so suddenly to reverse the mighty engines of history? Will the Slav states which have been revived, created or re-fashioned by the Treaties establish themselves in the esteem and confidence of Europe and successfully resist the dangers which may proceed from the valiant unreconciled aristocracies of Prussia and Hungary? These questions the future alone can solve.

Of the new creations, Poland is the most important, the most interesting and the most controversial. All through history the Poles, like the Irish, have been in the centre of the storm, combative, adventurous, temperamental, irrepressible. Their annals have been marked by extreme vicissitudes of fortune. At one time they have been masters of a wide Empire, at another

time partitioned and obliterated. That the Polish stock is capable of bearing brilliant fruit, the names of Copernicus, of Joseph Conrad and of Leibnitz (for his pedigree too was Polish) are sufficient to testify. Yet there are few parts of Europe where by the evidence of travellers the peasantry were so long permitted to live in a state of abject and miserable abasement.

The future of the new Polish Republic being so speculative and controversial, it has been thought wise to invite a distinguished Polish historian who possesses a remarkable command of the English language, to contribute the volume on Poland to the series of *Nations of the Modern World*. Professor Roman Dyboski does not, of course, approach his subject with the glacial impartiality which might be expected of a commentator from Japan. He feels the call of the blood too strongly for that. It is, however, more valuable for English readers to have the full Polish case at first hand from an eminent scholar who passionately believes in it, than to be introduced to the estimate of an alien, which, even if it be more scrupulously balanced, will fail to do justice to the "stress and form" of Polish life. Here then is a volume written with great vigour and conviction as well as from an overflowing fund of knowledge which presents to the English public the case for the Polish Republic and such reasons as there may be for thinking that it deserves to have a place in the sun and may hope to retain it.

H. A. L. FISHER.

York: A. Knopf, 1927. Sienkiewicz, H., *With Fire and Sword* (1890); *The Deluge* (2 vols., 1891); *Pan Michael* (1910); *Quo Vadis?* (1896 and later); *Knights of the Cross* (2 vols., 1930); all translated by J. Curtin, and published by Little, Brown & Co., Boston, U.S.A. *Idem*, *In Desert and Wilderness* (a story of African adventure for children), translated by M. Drezmal, illustrated by R. Schuyler, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1923. *Idem*, *Tales*, edited by Monica M. Gardner, London: J. M. Dent (Everyman's Library), 1931 (with bibliography of other English translations from Sienkiewicz). Slowacki, J., *Anhelli*, translated by D. Prall Radin and G. R. Noyes, London: Allen & Unwin, 1930. *Mazepka*, translated by C. D. and C. F. Wells, Alumni Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A., 1929. Weyssenhoff, J., *The Sable and the Girl*, translated by K. Żuk-Skarszewska, London: Allen & Unwin, 1929. Winawer, B., *The Book of Job*, a Satirical Comedy, translated by Joseph Conrad, London: J. M. Dent, 1931. Żeromski, S., *Ashes*, translated by H. Stankiewicz-Zand (2 vols.), New York: A. Knopf (London: Allen & Unwin), 1928.

X. *Poland's Position in the World of To-day and To-morrow.*

Joseph Conrad, *Poland Revisited* (1915); *A Note on the Polish Problem* (1916), *The Crime of Partition*, (1919), all included in *Notes on Life and Letters* (Uniform Edition, London, J. M. Dent, 1924); see also his *Prince Roman* (in *Tales of Hearsay*) and his *Personal Record: some Reminiscences* (1923, with *Author's Note and Familiar Preface* in the Uniform Edition). These writings of the great English novelist, who was a Pole by birth, although remote by their very date from the problems of to-day, throw most significant light on Polish national tradition and mentality. A noble interpretation of the Polish national character was given in War time by Miss Monica M. Gardner in her book, *Poland: a Study in National Idealism*, London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1915. Of the domestic and foreign problems which beset Poland in the first years of their new existence, a clear and succinct account was given by Professor Charles Sarolea in his *Letters on Polish Affairs*, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1922.

Among books which have a more immediate bearing on the problems of Poland in more recent years, and particularly on those discussed in the final chapter of this book, the following must be especially mentioned:

A. Skrzyński (Foreign Minister of Poland in 1923 and Prime Minister in 1925, d. 1931), *Poland and Peace*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1923. "Augur," *Eagles, Black and White: the Fight for*

the Sea, 2nd ed., London and New York: Appleton, 1929. C. Smogorzewski, *Poland, Germany, and the Corridor*, London: Williams & Norgate, 1930 (a documented reply to Sir Robert Donald's *The Polish Corridor and its Consequences*, London: Butterworth, 1929). E. W. L. Newman, *Britain and the Baltic*, London: Methuen, 1930. J. Weinstein, *Upper Silesia, a Country of Contrasts*, Paris: Gebethner & Wolff, 1931. A. Plutynski, *The German Paradox: a study of German political and economic life, with special consideration of the problem of East Prussia*, London, Wishart & Co., 1933.

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Pp. 23-4: on the partitions of Poland, see:

Lord Eversley, *The Partitions of Poland*, London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1915;—Robert Howard, Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland* (Harvard Historical Studies, vol. XXIII), Cambridge, Mass., 1916;—R. H. Lord, *The Third Partition of Poland* (in *The Slavonic Review*, London, vol. III, No. 9, March, 1925).

Pp. 21, 35, 423, 424: on King John Sobieski, see:

J. B. Morton, *Sobieski, King of Poland* (with plates, including portraits, and maps), pp. xvii, 286, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1932 (European Biographies).

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